

MI SHEBEIRACH -- PRAYERS FOR HEALING

Jews have incorporated prayers for healing into our services for millennia. We believe that they help those who are ill and in pain. Recently, scientists have conducted double-blind studies showing that patients who are prayed for, whether they know that they are being prayed for or not, have shown greater improvement in their health than others in a control group who are not prayed for. With this in mind, the members of the Hineynu committee have chosen to pray for individual Temple members and their loved ones who are undergoing major surgery, recuperating from illness or those who are critically or terminally ill. Below are some suggestions of prayers and Psalms that may be recited

PRAYERS

Prayer comes in many different forms. The most important element is that prayer comes from the heart. Choose a time of day that is best for you and a place that will allow you to concentrate on your prayer. Perhaps it is in the morning before you arise, perhaps just before you go to sleep. Visualize the person you are praying for and send them healing energy.

The traditional eighth blessing recited in the Amidah, paraphrasing Jeremiah 17:14

Heal us, Adonai, and we shall be healed,
Save us and we shall be saved,
For You are our glory.
Send complete healing of every illness to _____.
For You, O God, are the faithful, merciful Physician.
Praised are You, Adonai, who heals the sick of the people Israel.

Two of the healing prayers that we use in our services are:

El Na R'fa Na (Music by Hannah Tiferet Siegel)

[Moses said this to God when Miriam was afflicted with leprosy: "God, please heal her." It is short and to the point.]

El na r'fa na
El na r'fa na
El na r'fa na, r'fu-a sh'lei-ma.

Life is a circle.
Love is the song.
Peace is the story we've yearned for so long.
When we are partners with God in all things
The circle is completed, our hearts are blessed with wings.

El na r'fa na
El na r'fa na
El na r'fa na, r'fu-a sh'lei-ma.

Mi Shebeirach (Music by Debbie Friedman)

Mi Shebeirach avoteinu

M'kor habracha

L'imoteinu

May the source of strength who blessed the ones before us
Help us find the courage to make our lives a blessing and
Let us say, amen.

Me Shebeirach imoteinu, m'kor habracha l'avoteinu

Bless those in need of healing with *r'fua sh'leima*,

The renewal of body, the renewal of spirit, and

Let us say, amen.

PSALMS



Kethuvim, The Book of Psalms, is made up of 150 psalms, The tradition of reciting psalms for healing is a long one. In particular, the following Psalms are suggested for the following situations:

When someone is ill: 6, 9, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 28, 30, 31, 33-39, 41, 49, 55, 56, 69, 86-91, 102-104, 107, 116, 118, 142, 143, 148.

For help in troublesome times: 16, 20, 25, 26, 38, 54, 81, 85, 86, 87, 102, 130, and 142.

During a recovery from illness: 6, 30, 41, 88, and 103

For expressing gratitude: 9, 21, 57, and 95.

★ Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd; I shall not want", is a standard part of funerals and memorials services. Rabbi Harold Kushner has just published a book on the meaning of this psalm.

★ The book, *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body: Spiritual Leaders Unfold the Strength and Solace in Psalms*, edited by Rabbi Simka Y. Weintraub, offers the ten psalms identified by the Hasidic master Rabbi Nachman of Breslov as having special power to bring a true and complete healing. Ten Jewish spiritual leaders have each chosen one of these ten psalms and have offered introductions, commentaries that enable us to seek healing and meaning from them. The ten psalms are Psalm 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137, and 150. The ten Psalms are each said "to correspond to the Ten Sefirot of the Kabbalah, the mystical attributes through which the Creator brings the universe into being."

Psalm 16

Rabbi Harlan J. Wechsler's commentary on Psalm 16 brings out the powerful expression of trust and faith in God and gratitude for God's greatness. The Psalmist feels the nearness of the Divine Presence and confidence in Divine Protection.

Psalm 16,

These are among David's golden words.

Watch over me, God,

for I seek refuge in You.

You said to the Lord:

"You are my Master,

But my good fortune is not Your concern.

"Rather, the holy ones on the earth

-You care for them

And for the great ones whom I should emulate.

"When their pain multiplies,

They know to speedily turn to another.

But I cannot even pour their libations because of guilt,

I cannot even lift their names to my lips."

The Lord is the Portion, which is mine by right,

My Cup.

You nurture my destiny.

Labor pains turn into pleasantness---

So, too, I just see my inheritance of beauty.

I will bless the Lord who counsels me,

Though at night my conscience afflicts me.

I keep the Lord continually before me;

Because of God-Who-is my Right-Hand,

I shall not break down.

So my mind is happy,

My whole being joyful;

Even my body rests secure.

For You shall not abandon my soul

To the world of the dead,

Nor let the one who loves You

See his own grave.

Give me directions on life's road.

With Your Presence,

I am filled up with joys,

With the delights that ever come

From Your Strong Arm.

Psalm 77

"Psalm 77 is an important turning point in this collection, beginning with an expression of anguish and abandonment, the pain and persecution of a long bitter exile--but moving into an affirmation of faith that God is ever-present and compassionate, despite appearances to the contrary." Rabbi Harold M. Schulweiss interprets this as "The Echo of Your Promise".

Psalm 77

When I cry my voice trembles with fear
When I call out it cracks with anger.
How can I greet the dawn with song
When darkness eclipses the rising sun
To Whom shall I turn
When the clouds of the present eclipse the rays of tomorrow.
Turn me around to yesterday
That I may be consoled by its memories.
Were not the seas split asunder
Did we not once walk together through the waters
To the dry side
Did we not bless the
Bread that came forth from the heavens
Did your voice not reach my ears
And direct my wanderings
The waters, the lightning, the thunder
Remind me of yesterday's triumphs
Let the past offer proof of tomorrow
Let it be by comforter and guarantor.
I have been here before
Known the fright and found your companionship.
I enter the sanctuary again
To wait the echo of your promise.

✧ *Flames to Heaven: New Psalms for Healing and Praise* by Debbie Perlman is a book of 160 psalms to be treasured, with messages of hope for those in crisis and joy for everyday celebrations. Over 60 offer courage and comfort as well as healing for the sick. Other themes include, Shabbat and Yom Tov, The High Holy Days, Passover, Hanukah, Rosh Chodesh, Community and Modern Life.

Psalm One: A song for Comfort Before Surgery for H.J.L.

Listen!

Because I know You will hear me
As I fear this unknown I must enter,
Surrendering my self, my authority,
If only for a brief while.

Listen!

Because I know You will hear
As I praise You at this season
Spreading warmth of renewal over cold earth,
Even as my soul's chill is warmed.

Listen!

Because I know You are there:
Hearing me,
Warming me,
Renewing me,
Leading me through this time
To a place of health and vigor.

✧ Another excellent source of prayers and psalms for healing is *The Jewish Healing Center Prayerbook*. It was compiled by Rabbi H. Raphael Goldstein, former San Diego Jewish Community Chaplain, for people living with illness, their caregivers and loved ones, people in recovery from addictions and Bikkur Cholim volunteers. It includes sections on Psalms, Prayers for Healing Others, and Prayers for Healing Yourself.

All of the books mentioned above are available in our Temple Library.